

Good afternoon, and welcome to the 2019 State of Summit County. Thank you all so much for being here today and for standing shoulder to shoulder with me over the last year.

Thank you to our host, The Akron Press Club, for inviting me to deliver the State of the County as part of your programming.

Your attendance here today supports the Press Club's scholarship fund. Our community - our country - needs journalists now more than ever. We should all be advocates for individuals pursuing a career in journalism. Thank you, Akron Press Club, for being a leader in this effort and for the continued use of your platform for the yearly State of the County address.

Please join me in taking a brief moment to thank the Firestone High School Jazz Quartet, and Wendy Boyd, our interpreter from Greenleaf Family Center, who does such a wonderful job.

And, a big thank you to all of the staff here at the John S. Knight Center. Some of our most important community events and announcements are made in this very room. We are so very lucky to have such a wonderful venue and professional staff to orchestrate every detail. Two weeks ago, the John S. Knight Center staff helped us transform this center into another successful Summit for Kids event. Thank you for all of your hard work.

For the fourth time, we are partnering with Summit County ReWorks to make today a zero-waste event. Thank you, again, to the John S. Knight Center staff and the ReWorks team for your gold star work in this green endeavor.

To our elected officials—County Council members, Countywide and Statewide elected officials, mayors, township trustees and council members—your work motivates and humbles me. Your dedication to serving the greater good of all who live in Summit County truly inspires me. Thank you all.

I would also like to thank the representatives of our local foundations - Akron Community, GAR, Knight, Burton D. Morgan, and all of our philanthropic organizations, both large and small. The work you do on a daily basis to provide basic services to those in need, while helping plot the future course for our community, is true dedication. Our community has a wonderful reputation built upon this philanthropic work, and I thank you for leading the charge.

Lastly, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the three incoming presidents of our local universities. To Dr. Gary Miller with the University of Akron and Dr. John Langell of NEOMED - welcome to our community. Dr. Todd Diacon at Kent State University - welcome to your new position.

The three of you join Dr. Para Jones of Stark State College, as the leaders of our four key secondary education institutions. Dr. John Green, Dr. Beverly Warren, and Dr. Jay Gershen – thank you for everything you have done for Summit County and Northeast Ohio.

The last year was marked with some amazing accomplishments, as well as opportunities to learn and grow. My team continues to make sure that County services are uninterrupted and of the highest quality in the State of Ohio. Nothing tested this commitment more than last winter's federal government shut-down.

Despite the challenges this posed to our local community, our Department of Job and Family Services worked tirelessly to ensure that every Summit County resident, especially those most vulnerable, did not go without.

During the shutdown, which delayed food assistance to thousands of families in Summit County, we partnered with United Way's 2-1-1 service and the Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank to organize and fund multiple food box distributions throughout the County. These food boxes ensured our families continued to have food on their table while Washington squabbled over the shutdown.

This summer, we also partnered with OhioGuidestone, Jobs for Ohio Graduates, the Summit County DD Board, and the Akron Urban League to provide the opportunity for hundreds of teens to obtain their first jobs in our annual Summer Youth Program.

This program has a tremendous impact on the lives of these young Summit County residents—not only because it allows them to earn their first paycheck, but it also teaches them the soft skills necessary to seek and keep employment the rest of their lives. When we arm young people with the skills necessary to be productive workers, we are promoting a healthy economy today and helping to ensure our future success. Thank you to the dozens of companies and non-profit agencies who agreed to be worksites for these teens to learn the skills that will last them a lifetime.

While it is important that we lay the foundation for success for our future generations, the single largest growing need in our community is services for our seniors. Several years back, Akron Community Foundation identified the need to focus our community's attention on our aging population. Since then, numerous collaborators have come together to develop meaningful initiatives for our seniors.

We here at the County have embarked on an incredibly important collaboration with the Summit Senior Coalition to develop the *Getting Wiser Website*.

This website is a one stop shop for all our aging residents and those who help care for them. On your tables, you can find a resource guide that compliments this amazing website. These resource guides are a game changer.

As our community ages, the need for senior services will only continue to grow. Never before have we been so coordinated and proactively focused on the needs of seniors, and we plan to continue to build on these partnerships and collaborations.

To that end, Summit County has also begun its journey to become an Age Friendly Community. With the assistance of AARP and Direction Home, we will be hosting focus groups, studying other communities, and identifying what our aging population needs to continue to stay healthy and age in place.

This five-year plan includes working with Metro RTA to ensure the mobility of our seniors, working with our health systems to guarantee access to medical services, and celebrating our seniors' contributions.

Like so many of the initiatives we undertake, our work on senior programs requires creative and collaborative efforts, particularly when it comes to funding. It is astounding that we can provide these programs given that Job and Family Services receives a meager 35 cents a year from the State of Ohio for each senior in Summit County.

Like so many of our residents, the County has had no choice but to evaluate our budget and tighten our own belt over the last decade. While we operated in 2018 slightly in the black for the fourth time in the last five years, our annual budget remains below pre-recession levels.

We have reduced our number of employees by over 1,000 since 2008, and we operate on the lowest county sales tax rate in Ohio. Because we operate so efficiently and effectively, we spend far less per capita from our general fund than the other five large urban counties in Ohio.

For the first time in several budget cycles, it appears that the State's operating budget will provide some relief to counties tasked with carrying out some of the State's core functions. The State budget appropriates additional funding for indigent defense costs and provides for a small increase in document recording fees. However, the increased cost to operate the Presidential Election will likely consume any additional revenue received from the State in 2020.

Even with the increase in indigent defense reimbursements, Summit County will still need to budget over \$17 million from its General Fund in 2020 to fund mandated programs that are truly the responsibility of the State of Ohio. As we have done for the last several years, we will accomplish these tasks by being diligent and efficient with your taxpayer dollars.

I would like to give a special thanks to Summit County Clerk of Courts, Sandra Kurt, for her continued partnership in this effort. For the past several years, your Clerk of Courts has provided excess title funds to support additional funding for our public safety

operations. Fiscally responsible leadership like this keeps Summit County financially healthy and safer.

Perhaps the most important partnership for ensuring we operate efficiently and provide quality services is that with Summit County Council. I want to thank County Council for their willingness to come to the table as we work together to identify where we can improve our service to the community.

I would like to take a moment to recognize our Council members: President Jeff Wilhite, Vice-President Liz Walters, Clair Dickinson, John Donofrio, Ron Koehler, John Schmidt, Gloria Rodgers, David Hamilton, Jerry Feeman, Paula Prentice and Bethany McKenney. Thank you.

Whether it is keeping those in nursing homes safe, ensuring that we are being proactive in sustainability and environmental conservation, or looking for solutions to our stormwater issues, Summit County Council members are providing thoughtful and proactive leadership to our community. I am grateful to partner with them on these important initiatives.

Another effort I am proud to support is the Summit County Jail Operations Advisory Commission, created by County Council in 2017 and chaired by Councilman David Hamilton.

The Commission worked with the Sheriff's Office, the Prosecutor's Office, the Court of Common Pleas, Oriana House and my Division of Public Safety to find constructive solutions. At last year's State of the County, I announced a number of steps that we collectively agreed to pursue to improve conditions at the Jail. One year later, I am proud to announce that these initiatives are moving us in the right direction.

We have overhauled the Jail's camera system – replacing 107 cameras and adding an additional 261. Deputies and inmates, alike, have a better sense of security, and this new system will provide transparency to the community when questions arise. We have also made other safety improvements to prevent injury to the deputies and inmates.

For the first time since the Great Recession, we are now providing inmates with the services they need to improve their lives and to reduce tension at the facility. Both NA and AA meetings are now offered to both male and female inmates. We have increased the number of church services and we have re-opened the gymnasiums. We also restored library access for all inmates.

Thank you to those of you who brought a book with you today to aid our efforts in restocking the library's shelves. We will continue to work with Sheriff Barry and his staff to explore ways to expand and enhance this programming in an effort to make the County Jail safer.

We also took steps to improve the staffing levels at the Jail for the safety of the deputies and inmates alike. In last year's State of the County, I announced our plans to re-designate Glenwood Jail as a Community Alternative Sentencing Center to house low risk offenders with a focus on treatment. This shift allowed for the transfer of 18 deputies back to the County Jail. Additionally, we began scheduling deputies to work in 12-hour shifts at the jail, which provides better coverage and gives the deputies opportunities for more time with their families.

Our hope was that the change to 12-hour shifts would reduce overtime costs, which in turn, would free up funding for programming and possibly more deputies. I'm happy to announce, that overtime costs at the jail have decreased 26%, sick time has been reduced by 13%, and injury pay is down 59%.

The increased staffing capacity, the return of services for inmates, and the installation of new safety improvements are all positive steps forward for the Jail. I would like to thank Sheriff Barry, Prosecutor Walsh, Councilman Hamilton, the Common Pleas Judges, Oriana House, the Commission, my team, and the other members of the community who are responsible for these important changes.

Now, we still face challenges when it comes to running the jail. Notably, one third of the Sheriff's deputies are eligible to retire in 2019 and 2020. This transition is already underway, as 18 deputies have retired in 2019. While we made necessary adjustments to

improve staffing levels at the Jail, if we are not able to recruit and hire new deputies, much of our progress forward could be undermined.

To combat this issue, we initiated one of the most innovative collaborations of my tenure, in partnership with the Sheriff's Office, Job and Family Services, and the University of Akron.

Through an aggressive recruitment process and an advanced approach to utilizing our job training dollars, there are currently seven new recruits in the University of Akron's police academy. All of these recruits have passed every necessary background check, physical fitness test, and all other requirements to become a Summit County Deputy Sheriff.

Funding through Job and Family Services provides these recruits the ability to attend the academy completely free of charge. We are also providing them with everything from tuition, to uniforms, to additional resources needed to be a successful recruit.

At the end of their academy, and upon passing their exam, they will have a job with the Summit County Sheriff's Office, earning a good wage with excellent healthcare benefits and a pension. By working together and creatively leveraging funding, we were able to put people in a position to overcome a substantial economic barrier to becoming desperately needed new law enforcement officers.

All partners involved in this effort are committed to ensuring that our deputies and our entire staff reflect the diversity in our community. Removing barriers for those who wish to serve their community is a responsibility I encourage all of you to undertake. That's one reason, I'm so pleased to announce that we are focused on recruiting a diverse and dedicated staff of Deputy Sheriffs.

Recruitment events begin next week to identify our next class of potential deputies under this new program, all of whom will begin the academy in January. Information is on your tables regarding the recruitment events, and I encourage all of you to share it with your networks. Each of these collaborations to improve conditions at the jail moves us one step further to providing a safer County for all Summit County residents.

Over the past few years, we worked to ensure the safety of our residents, with an increasingly integrated approach to getting our first responders to the scene quicker and with more information.

Last year, we announced a collaboration between the County and the Cities of Akron, Cuyahoga Falls, Fairlawn, Green and Stow to jointly purchase and operate a new computer-aided dispatch system at a cost-savings to these communities of \$7 million over the next five years.

Since that time, our teams worked together to build the system and prepare for when the system goes live in each community. We are currently on pace for the initial group of users to begin using the system later this year, and for all users to be utilizing the system by the end of next year.

This new system will bring our first responders into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond, providing dispatchers and first responders with the ability to track the location of cell phones, receive texts and videos of incidents as they occur, and eventually allow for the deployment of apps that will enable citizens to play a more integrated role in public safety.

Earlier this year, we also completed an \$18 million conversion of the County's Emergency Radio System. This project included the addition of a tenth tower site to improve coverage, provide additional redundancy to improve reliability, and a connection to the State's radio system which allows our first responders to communicate with communities outside of the County's borders. Our radio system is now used by every community in

Summit County, along with schools, hospitals and countless other organizations involved in keeping our families safe.

Just a few months ago, when our community held its collective breath as a two-year-old boy went missing in Green, our Sheriff and his staff were able to speak directly with every officer and agent involved in the search. Thankfully, the young child was found unharmed, and our personnel were able to efficiently communicate with each other in an unprecedented fashion.

I would like to take a moment to thank the first responders involved in finding that little boy, as well as all of the first responders, countywide. You do the work of heroes, every day. We are so incredibly grateful.

With heroes on our minds, I would now like to turn to our veterans. In November of 2018, it was my honor to join over 250 people to dedicate the Summit County World War II Memorial. With fewer surviving veterans of World War II each day, it was indeed our duty to honor them and their fellow soldiers by installing these plaques on the Summit County Courthouse. The turnout and outpouring of respect from the community was overwhelming, a reminder that the men and women of Summit County respect and value our veterans.

A few months ago, I had the opportunity to visit Normandy, and tour the grounds where so many Americans gave their lives for our freedom. That visit reminded me that as the years continue to tick away, we must continue to recognize and honor those who gave the ultimate sacrifice so many years ago that changed the world.

That is why today, I am proud to announce that we will build upon the installation of the World War II plaques and an already-present World War I Doughboy statue by creating the Summit County Veterans Memorial Plaza outside of the County Courthouse. There, we will add memorials honoring fallen soldiers from World War I, The Korean War, The Vietnam War, and The Gulf War. In the future we plan to also include those we have lost in the War on Terror. While monuments cannot adequately show our appreciation to those who gave their lives, we must do everything we can to say thank you and never forget. I look forward to announcing a dedication of the Summit County Veterans Memorial Plaza in the coming months, and hope you all will be able to join me.

We also continue to honor local veterans with our support of the Summit County Stand Down for Homeless Veterans, which takes place on September 10<sup>th</sup>. Summit County has partnered with the FirstEnergy Foundation to jointly contribute \$80,000 toward this incredible event over the last four years.

I would like to thank the event's sponsors and volunteers who agree that no veteran should live without basic necessities, shelter and the gratitude of their community. To all of the veterans in our audience today, thank you.

At last year's address, I announced that we were beginning to work on The Summit Liberty House—Summit County's first female veterans' housing unit. In just a few weeks, on September 26<sup>th</sup>, we will cut the ribbon on this first of its kind facility in our community. By leveraging federal dollars and local partnerships, we were able to give a four-unit apartment building a modern-day overhaul so that homeless veteran women and their children have a warm, safe environment in which to thrive.

This collaboration between the County, the City of Akron, the Summit County Land Bank, and Family and Community Services helps solve real life problems for real life heroes. Thank you to Mayor Horrigan and Fiscal Officer Kristen Scalise, who also chairs the County Land Bank Board. Your commitment to improving the lives of these women and their families is honorable.

These veteran heroes are a part of the larger Summit County community – young and old – black, brown, and white – wealthy and disadvantaged – all different, yet all one.

Next year, the 2020 Census will be undertaken to count all of us.

It is critical to start talking about the Census now so that we may begin to highlight the importance of why we should all participate. Not only are federal funds that support the most underserved in our community allocated based on these numbers, but our congressional lines will be redrawn and our representation in Washington will reflect our response to the Census. Because the Census occurs only every ten years, it is critical that we count each and every person. Please, I encourage all of you to educate yourself, talk to your family, encourage your neighbors—complete the Census! Please remind them that next year, for the first time ever, they will be able to respond online, in addition to phone and paper.

On your tables you will find materials with important dates and other relevant information pertaining to the Census. I ask you to take this home and to share the information with your family and friends.

The year 2020 will also mark the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, which ensured the right to vote for many women. It was an important step to ensuring women are equal members of American society. With a rich history of accomplished women in Summit County, and many dedicated women currently serving in elected, community and

business leadership in our 31 communities, our County is a beacon of strong female leadership for other communities.

Several community members, including myself, have come together to begin planning the celebration of this important milestone next year. Our mission is to share information about events and resources that commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment. The focus will be on educating the public on the progress made over the last 100 years, and honoring the fight for voting rights for all women — especially many women of color who were excluded from voting until the 1960s. Together, we will help our community reflect on today's voting equality and the future of equity for all women.

I invite you to explore the history of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment and engage with others on a brand-new platform: [SummitSuffrageCentennial.com](http://SummitSuffrageCentennial.com), where you will be able to interact with the committee, request to meet with subcommittees, and identify and submit events near you. I would like to thank the women who have already come together to mark this important time in our history.

One of the marvelous benefits of being the Executive is that when you ask people to join together to accomplish something meaningful, they generally say yes. When I asked all of you last year to join together to help our Children Services levy pass, you responded—overwhelmingly. Thank you for your support of our children and those who serve them.

Now, I am going to ask you to do it again. This time for our ADM levy. The Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Board has also seen the opioid epidemic ravage our community over the last several years. Keep in mind, the last time ADM was on the ballot, the focused national conversation about opioids had not even begun. And while we have some positive movement on the epidemic, opioids continue to plague our community. Our first responders, health systems, ADM and many more still fight every single day to keep their heads above water.

We know people and families are struggling. We see you and we are committed to bringing about change. We must do everything we can to protect the resources we have in place to fight not just the opioid epidemic, but addiction of all types. I urge all of you to vote yes on the ADM levy on November 5th.

As many of you know, Summit County and Cuyahoga County are the two lead Plaintiffs in the national multi-district opioid litigation, with a trial date of October 21<sup>st</sup> fast approaching. I assure you that the team we have assembled is working diligently to prepare for trial.

We filed this lawsuit with the primary goal of stopping the practices of the opioid manufacturers and distributors that caused the epidemic, and recovering some resources to help in the ongoing battle against the epidemic.

We did not anticipate being selected to carry the torch for hundreds of counties and thousands of communities across the country. However, we have taken the challenge head on and are confident that the information we present will result in these defendants being held responsible for their actions.

As you can see today, we have many ways in which we are moving this community forward, and we must be steadfast to ensure that the opioid epidemic does not deter us from moving in a positive direction. While the past year has brought many accomplishments, perhaps the area where we have seen the most growth and success is in the area of economic development.

Close to one year ago, the County along with the City of Akron, the Greater Akron Chamber and the GAR Foundation unveiled our *Elevate Greater Akron* strategy to the community. This collaborative approach focuses our collective efforts across the Greater Akron area on five key strategies:

- a new approach to engaging and assisting local companies to stay, succeed and expand in our community;
- providing employment opportunities to everyone in our community, with a particular focus on our black population;
- refocusing our efforts and investments in downtown Akron and job hubs;

- sparking our entrepreneurial community;
- and aligning our organizations to be more coordinated, strategic and research-driven.

I would like to thank our partners in this effort, and in particular Mayor Dan Horrigan, Marc Merklin, Don Taylor, Jason Dodson, James Hardy, Steve Millard, and Christine Mayer. You and many others have put in **countless hours** to redesign our economic development ecosystem to meet the needs of both our businesses and our residents.

Prior to rolling out *Elevate Greater Akron* to the public, we spent nearly one year working together to design this new structure, and are approaching the one-year mark from the public roll-out. I think it is safe to say that during that time we have already seen some incredibly successful results.

As all of you know, last month we formally announced what some had termed the “worst kept secret in Akron” – the construction of a new Amazon distribution facility on the former site of the Rolling Acres mall.

This new facility is expected to create at least 1,500 new jobs, each paying at least \$15.00 per hour, plus benefits, in one of the hardest hit areas of our community. As you can imagine, a project of this size requires all hands to be on deck.

In addition to my team at Summit County, I would like to recognize all of those who worked on this project, including the entire team from the City of Akron, the Summit County Land Bank, the Development Finance Authority, TeamNEO, and JobsOhio.

I would also like to give a special thank you to Fiscal Officer Kristen Scalise, in her role as chair of the County Land Bank, and Engineer Al Brubaker, both of whose leadership helped fund important pieces of this project.

As we celebrate this success, the *Elevate Greater Akron* team, in connection with ConxusNEO, Metro RTA, Stark State College and others, are already beginning the work to ensure that these new jobs go to the men and women who live in Summit County. We will be working with local businesses to fill the workforce gaps that will inevitably come when Amazon begins to hire 1,500 workers in this community. We will engage with Amazon to take full advantage of its Career Choice Program to put people on the path toward long-term good-paying careers. This project is an enormous opportunity for our community, and we are proactively positioning ourselves to make the most of it for our residents.

While the Amazon announcement certainly steals the headlines, our teams have been hard at work on several other important projects. Not far from the Rolling Acres site, the last year brought over \$91 million in investment to downtown Barberton alone.

Last October, the County, City of Barberton and State of Ohio announced an \$80 million expansion of the BWXT facility, creating another 110 high-skilled and high-paying jobs at one of the nation's few facilities that manufactures parts for nuclear submarines.

At the end of last year, we also saw the Development Finance Authority partner with the City of Barberton and Akron Rubber Development Laboratories to help fund an \$11 million investment in a former downtown Barberton department store. These two large investments are supported by Barberton's reinvestment in its movie theater, breweries, restaurants and coffee shops in its downtown area.

These investments in Barberton are critical as the community continues to grapple with the loss of B&W, which announced earlier this year that it was moving to the East End in Akron. On one hand, we in the Greater Akron area viewed the retention of B&W locally and the relocation of its headquarters to here from Charlotte as an incredible success.

For the City of Barberton, however, it has proved to be incredibly challenging. I can stand here today and tell you that Mayor Judge did everything within his power to keep B&W in his community. It quickly became apparent that the company intended to find a new

corporate home elsewhere, and at that point it became the job of the County and its other regional partners to keep those 700 jobs here locally. Fortunately for Barberton, Mayor Judge has not stopped fighting for his community, and the investments of BWXT and ARDL are truly evidence of that fact.

In addition to these larger projects, the past year has brought many other successes in our County:

- the start of construction on Stark State's CDL training facility in the Massillon Road Industrial Park in Springfield Township;
- the re-use of County-owned land in South Akron for the future home of SAF, Inc., a growing, minority-owned construction company;
- the soon-to-open Akron Children's Hospital Boston Heights Health Center;
- the installation of new sewer lines, in partnership with the City of Green, in order to serve East Liberty Park and open up new land for development;
- *and*
- the recent news that the Summit County Transportation Improvement District has received ODOT funding for a project to help SA Comunale grow in Norton.

We are seeing the power of our collective efforts under the *Elevate Greater Akron* strategy create and keep jobs in all areas of our County.

Our work over the last year has not only been about specific projects with local, regional and national companies. We have also taken the time to develop new programming and strategic initiatives that will move our community forward over the next several years. In partnership with Fiscal Officer Kristen Scalise and the Development Finance Authority, we expanded the Akron-Summit Energy Special Improvement District to 14 of our 31 communities, and are in discussions with nearly half of the remaining communities to join in the coming months.

The ESID allows businesses in those member communities to make energy-efficiency improvements to their buildings, and to take advantage of low-interest financing that is paid off through an assessment on their property. Through this program, known as Property Assessed Clean Energy, or PACE, business owners are able to make improvements that they otherwise may not be able to afford.

Two months ago, we announced that we would be expanding the PACE program to allow owners of residential properties to take advantage of this new tool. The residential PACE program will allow homeowners to replace furnaces, roofs, windows and more without having to put the cost on a credit card or taking out a home equity loan to make those repairs. Instead, the cost of the repairs can be assessed against their home, and repaid through their tax bill for up to 20 years. We anticipate rolling this program out within the

next six months as communities authorize residential PACE, and we put important regulations in place to protect consumers.

The PACE program is just one example where the Development Finance Authority and its affiliated entities are continuing to innovate and find new ways to bring capital into our community.

Once again this year, the Development Fund of the Western Reserve has secured a \$30 million new market tax credit allocation which will be deployed to fund private and non-profit developments in some of the more challenged areas of Summit County and Northeast Ohio.

The DFA also recently created the Western Reserve Community Fund to become a Community Development Financial Institution that makes low-interest loans to businesses and non-profits in distressed areas. This spring, the County contributed \$250,000 to the Fund to be lent to local businesses to make energy-efficiency improvements to their buildings. Next month, I intend to introduce legislation to Summit County Council to contribute another \$100,000 from the County's Community Development Block Grant allocation toward this loan fund.

Collectively, these programs are aimed at rebuilding areas of our community struggling to thrive, and assisting our existing businesses with their needs to expand and grow.

We are fortunate to have the Development Finance Authority in Summit County. Thank you to the DFA's President, Chris Burnham, Board Chair Grace Wakulchik, and the entire DFA Board for the work you do to make our community better.

The *Elevate Greater Akron* team is also working to drive investment into 14 job hubs within the County. These job hubs are areas where we have a high concentration of traded-sector employers and a corresponding high concentration of jobs.

By driving public and private investment to these job hubs, we hope to counteract the urban sprawl that has made it increasingly difficult for many in our community to access promising and good jobs. We are currently developing marketing profiles for each of these 14 job hubs, which will highlight for site selectors the lands and buildings available for private investment.

Whether it is the new Bridgestone Race Tire Manufacturing facility in the Firestone Park Job Hub, the Bowery and the Law Building developments in the Downtown Akron Job Hub, or the continued and impressive growth of the Cornerstone Business Park in the Twinsburg Job Hub, our goal is to drive key investments to these areas.

One of the more important pieces of work facing us is how we can connect workers, particularly those with transportation barriers, to the jobs that are concentrated in these job hubs. We are actively working with Metro RTA and ConxusNEO to identify ways to

improve mobility to these job hubs, many of which are located in our suburban communities.

Recently, Metro RTA was awarded \$75,000 from the Fund for Our Economic Future in its Paradox Prize competition, which will be used to fund a pilot program to get workers from their neighborhoods to key employers in the job hubs in northern Summit County. These types of creative solutions are necessary to make sure we are providing access to jobs for all men and women of Summit County.

As I stated earlier, the initial returns on our *Elevate Greater Akron* strategy have been largely successful. However, for us to continue to be successful, we must maintain the collaborative atmosphere that we built over these last few years. As a community, we take great pride in our ability to collaborate, to partner together and to innovate. We must continue to walk the walk, and to place our collective interests over our individual interests.

Unfortunately, not all collaborative endeavors can be successful. A decade ago, several stakeholders in our community came together to announce the creation of the Austen BioInnovation Institute in Akron. The ABIA began as a unique collaboration of several anchor institutions in our community to capitalize on innovation and commercialization in the biomedical industry.

Despite the best intentions of these organizations, the dream of ABIA never fully materialized. What largely remains of ABIA is its headquarters building on North Main Street, which continues to be a great asset that is used, in part, by Akron Children's Hospital and Cleveland Clinic Akron General.

However, today, I am excited to announce a new day for the ABIA campus. At our first County Council meeting in September, I intend to introduce legislation to redevelop the ABIA campus into a new \$16.9 million world headquarters and research and development facility for The Smithers Group. This new facility will be made possible through a collaboration between The Smithers Group, the County, the City of Akron, the Development Finance Authority, Team NEO, JobsOhio, Akron Children's Hospital, FirstEnergy, and the Welty Building Company.

Akron Children's Hospital will continue to lease the lower half of the building at 47 North Main Street for its training and simulation needs, while the upper half of the building will be renovated into the new Smithers Group world headquarters. A new research and development building will wrap around the existing building, and several existing buildings will be demolished to make way for the new building and necessary parking.

This project will continue the transformation of downtown Akron, and will serve as a gateway welcoming those who enter downtown from the North.

Additionally, this project will represent an investment by the public partners into a local, high-growth company that provides testing, consulting, information and compliance services to the polymer, automotive, medical device, energy, and transportation industries. In short, this project is the embodiment of what we are trying to accomplish with Elevate Greater Akron – helping homegrown companies that specialize in key next-generation technologies to stay, grow and create jobs right here in Summit County. I look forward to sharing more details of this project in the coming weeks, and look forward to breaking ground on this new endeavor.

But today, I would like to thank Mike Hochschwender, CEO and President of the Smithers Group, Don Taylor from the Welty Building Company, Mayor Dan Horrigan, whose support was critical for this project, and the team behind the scenes that has spent countless hours putting this project together.

As you can see, the County and its partners have been incredibly busy over the past year. However, all of the work we put in – the new strategies, the new programs, the new opportunities for investment – are all for naught if we are not telling our story to the people and businesses we want to keep and attract.

Some time ago, I tasked my Economic Development team to develop a website and brochures to share those success stories, to share those opportunities for investment, and

to share those programs for businesses. In March, we proudly launched Summit4Success.com, a one-stop site for business-owners, site selectors and residents alike. We took care to highlight the most important features of our business-friendly environment, including some of our notable businesses, and the 31 communities that make Summit County unique.

This website also features a PBS-produced short film promoting the benefits of doing business in Summit County. In March of last year, we were approached by PBS producers who identified Summit County as a forward-thinking community in the heartland of America. In the film, you will see prominent Summit County business and community leaders talking about all that makes our community exceptional.

To date, that message has been carried to over 50 million homes throughout the United States. Please take a few minutes to see what folks from Honolulu all the way to Manhattan have seen about Summit County and why it is such a special place to live, work and raise a family.

So what does all of this mean to you? It means Summit County is moving forward.

I invite each one of you to join us in this exciting adventure. We do indeed have big city progress with a small-town feel right here in Summit County. And, I thank all of you for your contribution to this momentum.

Once again, thank you to the Akron Press Club, the staff of the John S. Knight Center, and to all of you for joining me here today.